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Don's Conference Notes--Don Reports on Anticipating Demand: The User Experience as Driver; the 2015 NFAIS Annual Conference, Creating Sustainable Community; the 2015 ACRL Conference

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Anticipating Demand: The User Experience as Driver — The 2015 NFAIS Annual Conference

Column Editor's Note: *Because of space limitations, this is an abridged version of my report on this conference. You can read the full article which includes descriptions of additional sessions at <http://www.against-the-grain.com/2015/07/2015-nfais-annual-conference/>. — DTH*

The 57th Annual Meeting of the **National Federation of Advanced Information Services (NFAIS)** was held in Arlington, VA on February 22-24, 2015. It attracted an audience of approximately 175 attendees and featured a mix of plenary and panel sessions and, of course, the **Miles Conrad Memorial Lecture**, presented this year by **Tim Collins**, President and CEO of **EBSCO Industries, Inc.** (see sidebar).

Keynote Address: The User of the Future



Kalev Leetaru, Founder of the **GDELT** Project, presented an information-packed keynote address on reimagining how we think about information that we can access from anywhere. Despite the huge growth in the amount of data now available, the basic search experience has not changed much in the last 50 years.

The **GDELT** Project compares events, quotes, people identified, images, etc. in global news articles and creates metadata from them. From its database, one can create a knowledge graph of events and how people are reacting to them. Studies such as this will help us understand what information will look like in the future, how users will interact with it, and how it can be delivered effectively and in a frictionless manner.

User Experience Demands on Libraries

David Shumaker, Professor of Library and Information Science at the **Catholic University of America** said that we are each in the center of our own information universe, and we all have our own personal information management systems (PIMs) that require maintenance, which consumes time that could be better used for scholarship, teaching, or research.

Peter Fox, Professor at **Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**, agreed with **Shumaker** and said that the goal of an information system must be to get something back to the user as quickly as possible. He advocated use cases to expose system requirements and said that we must get away from building "systems" and focus on frameworks instead. (Systems have well-defined entry and exit points, but frameworks can have many.)

New Workflow Tools

Five new startup companies presented their products:

- **Kudos** helps researchers maximize the visibility and impact of their published articles, and provides tools to explain, enrich, share, and measure the impact of their publications.
- **Sparrho** is a personalized recommendation engine that uses personalized newsfeeds to help researchers make connections to others having similar interests and discover content outside normal sources.
- **Sciencescape** organizes and maps published papers and presents them to researchers as a knowledge graph, which helps them discover and share new key papers in their field.
- **ZappyLab** has built a repository of science protocols and is trying to overcome the problem of a researcher rediscovering knowledge previously discovered by others.
- **Hypothes.is** provides a method of annotating web pages (like marginal notes made in books) and permits private discussions, collaborative discussions, and public annotations.

Information Wants Someone Else to Pay for It

Micah Altman, Director of **MIT Libraries' Program on Information Science**, described several current trends in authorship:

- Data is being created at an ever increasing rate, and publication is no longer the end stage of information dissemination.
- Collaborations have become more multidisciplinary.
- Many new challenges to curating and evaluating the output of the research process have arisen.
- We are tracking more types of information, and more processes are generating data than ever before.
- No single organization can preserve and maintain all the information upon which it relies.

Flash Builds: Rapid Prototyping

A new **JSTOR** team, **JSTOR Labs**, is using "Flash Builds" to create prototypes of new products:

- **JSTOR Snap** allows a user to take a photo of a page with a smartphone and receive a list of relevant articles on the same topic from the **JSTOR** database.
- In a partnership with the **Folger Shakespeare Library**, a **JSTOR Labs** team used Flash Builds to create an app linking the lines in plays with research articles that quoted them.

A special environment is necessary for projects like this to succeed:

- Teams must be small but have both technical design and business skills.
- It is important to have a place to innovate with both technical and cultural support so there is a safe place to fail, a comfort level with uncertainty, and dedicated time to work without distractions of meetings, email, etc.
- Prototypes must be shown to users early and often, and in the presence of the whole team.

New Content for Researchers

Researchers typically have these specific desires in choosing a search system:

- Better search and discoverability,
- Better user experience (navigation needs to make sense),
- More choices (PDF, HTML, EBPUB, etc.)
- More visual and interactive content,
- Better subject collections (taxonomies and semantic technologies),
- No multiple logins, and
- Better catering to shorter attention spans.

Here are some examples of products that fulfill those needs:

- **MIT's Press Batches:** bundles of 9 to 12 articles on topics identified by altmetric studies.
- **APS's APSelect:** groups of 8 to 10 articles selected monthly by **APS** editors.
- **eLife Lens:** an HTML-based viewer that improves the readability of journals by presenting parts of articles (citations, references, tables, etc.) on a side panel so that the reader can view them along with the text and without the need to scroll through the article.

The Changing Landscape of Scholarly Communication



In his very challenging Members-only Luncheon Address: "Quo Vadis? The Changing Landscape of Scholarly Communication," **Keith Webster**, Dean of Libraries at **Carnegie-Mellon University**, gave a sobering view of the changing world of libraries and how they must adapt to survive. Phenomena that have occurred in today's

continued on page 74

The Miles Conrad Memorial Lecture



The Miles Conrad Memorial Lecture is traditionally a highlight of NFAIS annual meetings. This year's lecture was presented by **Tim Collins**, President and CEO of **EBSCO Industries, Inc.**

Collins' address focused on industry trends in the academic library market and traced the evolution of library searching. From 1982 to about 1995, OPACs worked, then searching became fragmented as full-text platforms, secondary databases, repositories, eBooks, and e-journals appeared. **Google** use proliferated, but in the library world, users were forced to learn several interfaces running on slow (but viable) platforms, and access was dysfunctional. Now, with the appearance of discovery service platforms having all online data sources and the OPAC in one place, search works again.

There are four types of academic library users:

- **General researchers** (undergraduates) who are meeting expectations that Google set by using discovery services that include images, video, etc. and provide improved relevancy ranking,
- **Sophisticated users** (graduate students and researchers) who continue to use subject-specific databases (although discovery services play a role for them),
- **Browsers** who use features within discovery services that integrate with their workflows, and
- **Known-item searchers**, who can acquire desired content through discovery.

The future will see better relevancy ranking and a critical role for abstracting and indexing services that provide high-quality metadata for discovery systems. **EBSCO** is now working on normalizing multiple thesauri for use on different services.

EBSCO has followed these industry principles in taking advantage of and influencing trends:

- Identifying and eliminating compromises that users have been accepting, such as poor linking between secondary and full-text databases,
- Long-term partnerships are better than short-term gains, and all parties must have an economic incentive to participate,
- Improving rather than changing user behavior by eliminating steps in existing processes and combining separate processes into one, and
- Increasing revenue growth potential by expanding product lines and adding products that enable access to budgets where the original buyer has an influence.

Usage is a key success driver in future purchasing decisions. It is critical for publishers to get their content into discovery systems. **EBSCO** works to support librarians' information life-cycles: selection, ordering, resource management, discovery, access, and analysis.

The information market has consolidated over the past 30 years, which will continue. It is driven by merging of technologies in the value chain, economies of scale, venture capital, and private equity. **EBSCO** strives to maintain an entrepreneurial spirit while growing. These are the principles it has followed over the years; they are all obvious, but living up to them can be a challenge.

1. Commit to sustained profit growth,
2. Have a defined vision and operate with a bias for action,
3. Be customer focused and sales driven,
4. Understand that change is necessary,
5. Recognize that you can't manage what you can't measure,
6. Foster creativity and continuous improvement,
7. Insist on quality,
8. Do what you say you will do,
9. Cultivate passion,
10. Realize that business is a long-run game,
11. Improve the foundation, and
12. Be humble.

Don's Conference Notes from page 73

world of academic libraries include:

- Students crowd libraries without using them (in the traditional way).
- The world of open science is beginning to transform scholarly communication.
- The success of e-journals has driven the researcher from the library.
- Web-based knowledge and research tools are growing, often outside the institution.
- Open access has shaped policy agendas.
- Library budgets are under pressure.
- Shareholders and venture capitalists expect returns on their investments, leading to pressure between customers and investors.

Contact between researchers and information professionals is rare. Our library ecosystem is clearly under threat. Libraries have missed the mark in connecting with researchers to ensure their long-term viability and have not shared in government investments in science. Instead of focusing on the size of their collections, libraries must think about their impact on teaching and research. One career path for librarians is to become embedded in their users' environments and become specialists in evaluation of technology.

Business Models and New Policy Impacts: Two Panel Discussions

Business Models: Partner, Build, or Acquire

- Help users to discover what is happening, especially on the fringes of a field.
- Make connections through content to people.
- It is expensive to market directly to researchers.
- Most startups do not realize how difficult it is to gain users.
- Bringing an idea to life as a new product or service is exciting, something like parenting.
- Normalizing content is a critical and difficult step.
- The best way to make people aware of your existence is by personal networking.

Impacts of Policy

- It is important to try and understand what users do.
- Sometimes traditional policies get in the way of what we want to do, so we must work on change management.
- Societies must be sure they are meeting the needs of their authors.
- We have not yet figured out the model to move from subscriptions to open access.
- Metadata is really an advertisement for your content.
- Policies must be reviewed regularly and validated.
- Privacy and customized services will always be at odds with each other.

Closing Address: Where Do We Go From Here?

Michael Nelson, consultant with **CloudFlare, Inc.** and Adjunct Professor, **Georgetown University**, said that in the next ten years we will see as much change as we saw in the last 20. Big data is a hot topic now because:

- 1) The supply is huge and growing.
- 2) Tools for data manipulation have become widely available. The Internet of Things, open source data analytics tools, and massive data sources from the government have all led to what Nelson calls "Cloud+."
- 3) Demand for data is growing.

These trends are reshaping our economies. The Cloud+ gives people almost free cycles of processing and storage, which makes it easier for them to get the information and tools they need, improves collaboration, and enables them to contribute to new projects.

continued on page 75

Today's vision of the digital economy revolves around innovative ecosystems: the ability to share information while protecting private information, more open companies, erring on the side of transparency, and learning to share. We need smart policies, smart technologies, a smart culture, and smart intellectual property rights. The key to all of this is trust.

Next year, the **NFAIS** annual meeting will return to Philadelphia on February 21-23. 🐼

Creating Sustainable Community: The 2015 ACRL Conference

Column Editor's Note: *Because of space limitations, this is an abridged version of my report on this conference. You can read the full article which includes descriptions of additional sessions at <http://www.against-the-grain.com/2015/07/2015-acrl/>. — DTH*

The 2015 conference of the **Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)** on March 25-28 drew 3,400 attendees — a record number that included 1,250 first-time attendees — to the beautiful city of Portland, Oregon. It was the largest **ACRL** conference ever, and it also marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of **ACRL**. The program featured nearly 500 sessions, a busy exhibit hall with about 200 exhibitors, about 200 poster sessions, three keynote addresses, a special 75th anniversary panel discussion, and many roundtable discussions on a wide variety of subjects.

Keynote Addresses — Wilson, Abramrad, Lessig

The opening keynote was by **G. Willow Wilson**, a comic book writer whose “Ms.Marvel” series about a young female superhero has been widely acclaimed and has been reprinted six times. **Wilson** is also a journalist and graphic novelist; as a part-time resident of Egypt, she has written about issues relating to the Middle East for several prestigious publications.

In her keynote address, **Wilson** described the present as an era of tumultuous change in which young Millennials, the most diverse audience in American history, are reinvestigating history and are becoming skeptical about many formerly widely accepted narratives.

Jad Abramrad is the creator and host of **Radiolab** (<http://www.radiolab.com>), a public radio program that is broadcast on over 500 radio stations. **Abramrad** noted that radio gives us the ability to connect with people across space and time; you can be with people even though you are by yourself in the studio.

Every **Radiolab** story starts with a seed of an idea that expands as it is developed. There is usually about a 25% probability of a story being satisfactory for the show; many ideas must be considered (usually about 15) to get enough for a complete show.

Lawrence Lessig, Professor of Law and Leadership and Director of the Safra Center of Ethics at **Harvard Law School** and founder of **Rootstrikers**, a network of activists leading the fight against government corruption (<http://www.rootstrikers.org>), concluded the conference with a thought-provoking address in which he examined three principles having a significant effect on academic libraries.

1) Corruption in government funding. Primary U.S. election campaigns are mainly influenced by money; because of large donations from a small number of donors, elections inevitably become biased. The consequence is a democracy dominated by the funders, and the preferences of the average American have a near zero impact on public policy.

2) Net neutrality. The Internet was designed with a simple architecture enabling it to foster innovation. Much that we take for granted today was developed by individuals working in the proverbial garage, who were able to produce their innovations because the initial architecture of the Internet was one of freedom. The current fight for network neutrality is one to preserve equality and an equal right to innovate.

3) Open Access. Some copyright laws do not serve their original purpose, which was to create incentives for authors and creators to publish their works. They were not enacted to serve the interests of publishers. For example, when **JSTOR** was launched, it was hailed because of the access that it provided to scholarly journals. But recently **JSTOR** has been criticized because of its charging practices that limit or prevent access to people not affiliated with universities that subscribe to it. Academics built the world of the Internet, but they did not make sure that everything was available to everyone. Access restrictions serve no copyright purposes of the authors, make no sense, and hinder people around the world from being creative.

In **Lessig's** opinion, equality does not mean the end of big companies or a lack of quality, but it does mean equal access to a platform of equality. He said that we must remember and relearn what role equality plays and how it relates directly to us and suggested reading *Our Declaration* (Norton, 2014) by **Danielle Allen**. As scholars and librarians, we have a moral obligation to preserve knowledge the way it was promised — as universally accessible as possible.

75th Anniversary Panel: New Roles for the Road Ahead

A panel of three experts: **Steven Bell** from **Temple University**, **Lorcan Dempsey** from **OCLC Research**, and **Barbara Fister** from **Gustavus Adolphus College**, discussed *New Roles for the Road Ahead*, a report containing essays they wrote to mark **ACRL's** 75th anniversary (http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/publications/whitepapers/new_roles_75th.pdf). Each panelist began by describing what they like to write about:

Bell: The intersection of higher education and libraries and how we integrate our work into the community around us.

Dempsey: Technology and citation management, which has moved from a paper-based to a networked environment, resulting in the development of specific programs such as **Zotero** and **Mendeley**.

Fister: Information literacy, including students and our relationship with them, and how we can collaborate with other units on campus and contribute to public knowledge.

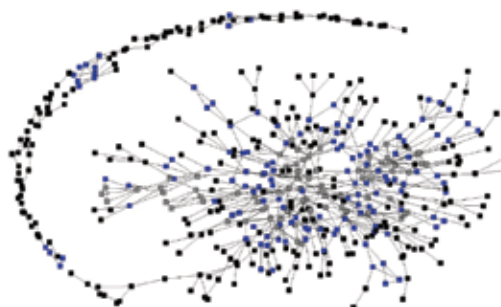
The panelists identified collaboration, the perception of the library as a supporter of research, visibility, privacy, and change in higher education as issues that need to be addressed.

Libraries and Food Trucks

Twitter has become a cultural movement; libraries and food trucks both use it heavily to market to their clienteles. Some of the conclusions of a recent study are:

- Twitter has become part of the business model for food trucks.
- The majority of libraries do little reciprocal tweeting, but food trucks do — see the figures below.
- Academic libraries have been on Twitter longer than food trucks have, but trucks tweet much more than libraries.
- Trucks engage with their users more than libraries do; libraries' Twitter usage is more like a newsletter.

Reciprocal Mentions between Libraries



continued on page 76